Covid-19: remote consultations
A quick guide to assessing patients by video or voice call

This graphic, intended for use in a primary care setting, is based on data available in March 2020, much of which is from hospital settings in China. It will be revised as more relevant data emerges.

1 Set up
Prepare yourself and decide how to connect
- Have current ‘stay at home’ covid-19 guidance on hand
- Confirm the patient’s identity
- Note patient’s phone number in case connection fails
- If possible, ensure the patient has privacy

2 Connect
Make video link if possible, otherwise call on the phone
- Check video and audio
- Confirm the patient’s identity
- Check where patient is

3 Get started
Quickly assess whether sick or less sick
- Rapid assessment
- Establish what the patient wants out of the consultation, such as:
  - Clinical assessment
  - Reassurance
  - Advice on self isolation

4 History
Adapt questions to patient’s own medical history
- Contacts
  - Close contact with known covid-19 case
  - Immediate family member unwell
  - Occupational risk group
- History of current illness
  - Date of first symptoms

5 Examination
Assess physical and mental function as best as you can
- Over phone, ask carer or patient to describe:
  - State of breathing
  - Colour of face and lips
- Over video, look for:
  - General demeanour
  - Skin colour

6 Decision and action
Advising and arranging follow-up, taking account of local capacity
- Likely covid-19 but well, with mild symptoms
  - Self management, fluids, acetaminophen
  - Reduce spread of virus - follow current government ‘stay at home’ advice
- Likely covid-19, unwell, deteriorating
  - Arrange follow up by video, monitor closely if you suspect pneumonia
  - Safety netting
    - If living alone, someone to check on them

Red flags
- Covid-19:
  - Severe shortness of breath at rest
  - Difficulty breathing
  - Pain or pressure in the chest
  - Cold, clammy, or pale and mottled skin
  - New confusion
  - Becoming difficult to rouse
  - Blue lips or face
  - Little or no urine output
  - Coughing up blood

Other conditions, such as:
- Neck stiffness
- Non-blanching rash

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